

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 EB-07 DOTE-00 INT-05 AID-05

CIAE-00 FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 XMB-02

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FM AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1811

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INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELTN, ECON, EMIN,CG

SUBJ: LAND TRANSPORTATION ROUTES SERVICING SHABA REGION

REF: (1) LUB A-60, 12/16/74 (2) LUB A-52, 8/15/75

(3) LUB A-05 1/26/76

1. FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF LUBUMBASHI A-13 DATED MARCH 11, 1976

A. BEGIN SUMMARY.THE REGION OF SHABA WHICH, WITH ITS COPPER EXPORTS, PROVIDES BULK OF ZAIRE'S TOTAL REVENUE AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE, DEPENDS ALMOST ENTIRELY ON CENTRAL AFRICAN RAILROAD NETWORK TO MOVE EXPORTS AND ESSENTIAL IMPORTS. THAT NETWORK CONSISTS OF FOUR MAJOR LINES, ONLY ONE OF WHICH IS WHOLLY ZAIRIAN CONTROLLED. IN AUGUST, 1975, BENGUELA RR RUNNING THROUGH ANGOLA WAS CLOSED AS RESULT EVENTS THAT COUNTRY, ELIMINATING IMPORTANT SOURCES SHABA'S IMPORTS AND SETTING OFF

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SEVERE FUEL CRISIS IN REGION, AS OTHER LINES NOT ABLE FULLY

COMPENSATE FOR ITS LOSS. IN EARLY MARCH 1976 MOZAMBIQUE CLOSED BORDER WITH RHODESIA CUTTING OFF ALL SHABA'S IMPORTS AND EXPORTS FORMERLY SENT VIA BEIRA.

B. LOSS THESE TWO RR LINES PRESENTS SHABA WITH SEVERE COMMERCIAL DIFFICULTIES. IT TECHNICALLY POSSIBLE TRANSFER TRAFFIC FORMERLY SHIPPED VIA BEIRA TO PORT OF DURBAN, S. AFRICA, BUT GOZ NOT YET ADDRESSED ITSELF THIS MATTER. GOZ AUTHORITIES HOPE OPTIMISTICALLY THAT CAPACITY ZAIRIAN NATIONAL ROUTE MAY BE INCREASED ENOUGH TO ALLOW EXPORTATION ALL COPPER PRODUCED IN REGION VIA TWO NORTHERN ROUTES. HOWEVER, OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED ALONG NATIONAL ROUTE OVER LAST YEAR CAST SOME DOUBT ON THAT HOPE.

C. CONTINUED DETERIORATION CENTRAL AFRICAN RR SYSTEM MAY HAVE MORE SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR SHABA'S ESSENTIAL IMPORTS THAT ITS EXPORTS. SPARE PARTS AND PETROLEUM IMPORTS HAVE ALREADY SUFFERED AS RESULT CLOSURE BENGUELA RR. LOSS OF BEIRA PORT NOW LIMITS IMPORTS ON SOUTH ERN ROUTE TO DURBAN PORT. MOST SERIOUS DANGER LIES AS YET IN HYPOTHEITICAL FUTURE SITUATION: COLLAPSE OF ALL RHODESIA'S BORDERS. SHOULD THIS OCCUR IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE, REGION OF SHABA WOULD VERY LIKELY BE CRIPPLED AS IT DEPENDS ON RHODESIAN MAIZE TO FEED WORKING POPULATION, AND ON RHODESIAN COAL AND EXPLOSIVES TO KEEP GECAMIS, THE NATIONAL COPPER COMPANY, RUNNING.

D. FOR THE MOMENT OFFICIALS IN SHABA BELIEVE ODDS ARE RUNNING AGAINST THIS POSSIBILITY AS ZAMBIA STILL HAS INTEREST IN KEEPING FRONTIERS OPEN (FOR ELECTRICITY IMPORTS ETC.), BUT COMPLICATIONS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN AS RESULT OF SUSPENSION EXPORTS AND RESULTING REDUCTION IN RR CARS FOR EXCHANGE PURPOSES. ONLY CONCEIVABLE (ALTHOUGH INSUFFICIENT ALTERNATIVE TO RHODESIAN SOURCE AND SOUTHERN ROUTE WOULD BE REOPENING BENGUELA RR. HOWEVER, IN SPITE OF A FEW OPTIMISTIC OPINIONS, IT APPEARS UNLIKELY THAT THIS COULD BEGIN EFFECTIVE OPERATION IN LESS THAN SIX MONTHS;

IT WILL PROBABLY TAKE MUCH LONGER. END SUMMARY.
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